

Am I Dependent or Independent?

When I fill out the 2009–10 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSASM)*, will I have to provide information about my parents?

It depends. Answer these questions:

Were you born before Jan. 1, 1986?	Yes	No
Are you married? (Answer "Yes" if you are separated but not divorced.)	Yes	No
At the beginning of the 2009–10 school year, will you be working on a master's or doctorate degree program (such as an M.A., M.B.A., M.D., J.D., Ph.D., Ed.D., or graduate certificate, etc.)?	Yes	No
Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. armed forces for purposes other than training? (If you are a National Guard or Reserves enlistee, are you on active duty for other than state or training purposes?)	Yes	No
Are you a veteran of the U.S. armed forces?*	Yes	No
Do you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2009, and June 30, 2010?	Yes	No
Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, now and through June 30, 2010?	Yes	No
At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care, or were you a ward or dependent of the court?	Yes	No
Has it been decided by a court in your state of legal residence that you are an emancipated minor or that you are in a legal guardianship?	Yes	No
At any time on or after July 1, 2008, were you determined to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless, as determined by (a) your high school or district homeless liaison or (b) the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development?	Yes	No
At any time on or after July 1, 2008, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?	Yes	No

* Answer No (you are not a veteran) if you (1) have never engaged in active duty in the U.S. armed forces, (2) are currently a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) student or a cadet or midshipman at a service academy, (3) are a National Guard or Reserves enlistee activated only for state or training purposes, or (4) were engaged in active duty in the U.S. armed forces but released under dishonorable conditions. Also answer No if you are currently serving in the U.S. armed forces and will continue to serve through June 30, 2010.

Answer Yes (you are a veteran) if you (1) have engaged in active duty in the U.S. armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard) or are a National Guard or Reserves enlistee who was called to active duty for other than state or training purposes, or were a cadet or midshipman at one of the service academies and (2) were released under a condition other than dishonorable. Also answer Yes if you are not a veteran now but will be one by June 30, 2010.

Did you answer Yes to any of the questions? If so, then for federal student aid purposes, you're considered to be an independent student and do not have to provide information about your parents on the FAFSA.

Did you answer No to every question? If so, then for federal student aid purposes, you're considered to be a dependent student, and you must provide information about your parents on the FAFSA. Not sure who counts as your parent? See the instructions on the FAFSA or check out "Who Is My 'Parent' When I Fill Out the FAFSA?" at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/pubs.

If you have no contact with your parents and don't know where they live, you should discuss your situation with the financial aid office at the college or career school you plan to attend. The financial aid administrator will help you figure out what to do next.

Fill out the FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

